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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
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Forty-sixth session

COLLECTION

UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the High Commissioner's report on UNHCR's activities for 1994-1996 as contained in the following documents:

A/AC.96/845/Part I	Consolidated programmatic, Budgetary and Financial Information
A/AC.96/845 Part II	Field and Headquarters
A/AC.96/845 Part III	Humanitarian Assistance Policy, Programmes, Administrative and Financial Matters.
A/AC.96/845/Part I/Add.1	Update of UNHCR Programme and Funding Projections for 1995 and 1996 (Advance copy)

GE.95-03245

The Advisory Committee also considered advance copies of documentation dealing with the following: (i) Assistant High Commissioner: Policy, Planning and Operations (A/AC.96/846/Part VII/Add.1); (ii) UNHCR Inspection and Evaluation Activities (A/AC.96/852); (iii) Education Account (EC/SC.2/81). During its consideration of the documentation on 13 September 1995, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the High Commissioner who provided additional information.

2. The Advisory Committee commends UNHCR's efforts to streamline and improve the format and presentation of the budget documents as well as its attempts to incorporate the Advisory Committee's recommendations made during the Committee's review of UNHCR's initial estimates for 1995 (A/AC.96/834). The Advisory Committee found the definition of terms and summaries presented in the consolidated budget document (A/AC.96/845/Part I) particularly useful and requests that this practice be maintained in future budget presentations. The Committee requests that further efforts to eliminate duplication and provide greater transparency in the documentation should be continued and that, to facilitate analysis, there be only one comprehensive overview document which can then be updated with addenda as indicated in paragraph 1 above. The Advisory Committee also experienced some difficulty in co-relating the narrative portions with the tabular information in the documents and recommends that use of cross-referencing be made to reconcile various forms of information in the documentation. The Advisory Committee appreciates the timeliness of the submission of the documents, thus allowing the Committee sufficient time to consider the High Commissioner's budget proposals and present its own report to the Executive Committee of UNHCR.

Resources

3. Details of resources made available during 1994 as well as projections of expected resources during 1995 and 1996 are outlined in paragraphs 20 to 22 of the consolidated budget document (A/AC.96/845/Part I). The Advisory Committee notes that the information contained in Table II of the same document has been replaced by information contained in Annex I of document A/AC.96/845 Part I/Add.1; the updated Annex shows estimates of expected resources and expenditure as at 1 September 1995.

4. Annex I (A/AC.96/845 Part I/Add.1) sets out the resource situation for General Programmes, Special Programmes and Repatriation Programmes as at 1 September 1995. The Advisory Committee notes that the current projections in Annex I show a shortfall of $89.1 million for 1995 for Special Programmes and $47.3 million for Repatriation Programmes. The Advisory Committee was informed that if the necessary funds are not made available, the activities planned for 1995 will be redefined. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee believes that if there is a likelihood of the trend continuing and projected income is not fully realized, appropriate measures to curtail spending should be initiated well in advance in areas of the budget, such as administration and management and personnel growth. It is also essential to improve the efficiency in the implementation of all UNHCR programmes at the headquarters and in the field.

1994 Expenditures

5. The Advisory Committee notes the information on the variations in expenditures during 1994 as indicated in paragraph 64 of the overview document (A/AC.96/845/Part I); actual expenditure for 1994 for Headquarters was $115.0 million as compared to revised estimates of $111.1 million. The net increase of $3.9 million was mainly due to increased staff costs, and lower than expected exchange rates partially offset by savings in non-staff costs. As indicated, the additional expenditure for staff costs "resulted from the need to create temporary posts and provide substantial temporary assistance at Headquarters to cope with the Burundi/Rwanda emergency." The decrease in non-staff costs were mainly due to savings achieved in delays in the implementation of the VSAT project and deferral of the move to the new UNHCR premises as well as a reduction in mission travel.

1995 revised estimates

6. With regard to estimates for 1995, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 65 of the overview document (A/AC.96/845/Part I) that initial 1995 estimates for Headquarters were established at $102.0 million while revised estimates are now projected at $118.3 million, representing an increase of $16.3 million, $8.7 of which can be attributed to factors such as exchange rate variations and revision of pensionable remuneration and staff salary scales. The balance is due to additional $7.5 million in post/staff costs and a net of $145,400 in non staff costs.

7. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes that the revised 1995 budget has been calculated using an exchange rate of SwF 1.32 to US $1 with no built in inflation factor; as the initial estimates had been calculated at a rate of SwF. 1.43 to US $1, the application of the new rate on posts/staff and non staff costs has resulted in an increase of approximately $7.5 million with increases in the pensionable remuneration of Professional staff effective 1 March 1995, and in General Service salary scales effective 1 January 1995, as well as other factors such as the post adjustment multiplier, which have also resulted in an increase of approximately $1.2 million.

8. The revised estimate of $7.5 million represents increases due to salaries and common staff costs associated with a net increase of 61 posts (39 Professional and 22 General service) as well as requirements for such items as general temporary assistance, consultancies and overtime.

9. As indicated in paragraph 65 (iii) of the Overview document (Part I), a net increase of non-staff costs by $0.145 million is primarily due to increased costs associated with deferral of the move to new premises, ($3.5 million) increased costs for items such as communications and E-mail and computer hardware requirements ($2.4 million), offset by savings in travel ($1.0 million), transfer of field training budgets from Headquarters ($1.0 million), a reduction in the IMIS budget ($1.5 million) and savings due to an agreement not to pay rent in 1995 for the new premises ($2.2 million).

10. The Advisory Committee had extensive discussions with he representatives of the High Commissioner regarding the factors affecting the increases/decreases in the UNHCR Headquarters budget estimates. The Advisory Committee also enquired and received information on those increases, particularly relating to additional staffing, which were as a result of emergency situations or could be attributable to new initiatives and programmes being undertaken during the current budget year. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the management at headquarters of increased activities in the field should to the maximum extent possible be accommodated within available staff and other resources at headquarters.

11. With regard to premises, the Advisory Committee was informed that the move to the new Montbrillant building (MBT), which had previously been scheduled for May 1994, did not take place until March-May 1995. The Advisory Committee notes that actual expenditure in 1994 amounted to $7.6 million as against a revised estimate of $7.5 million for 1994 (Part I para. 68). The revised 1995 estimates have had to include an additional amount of $3.6 million above the initial estimate of $34,000. As indicated in paragraph 68 of the overview document (A/AC.96/845/Part I), of the additional $3.6 million, an amount of $1.4 million was for the actual removal costs, final equipment and building preparation costs and temporary labour during the move. The remaining $2.2 million was required for additional furniture and equipment as well as for the preparation of an additional Headquarters building (Vermont Nations Geneve) which was required to accommodate approximately 250 Headquarters staff.

12. The Advisory Committee requested and received a detailed breakdown of expenditures incurred during 1994 as well as the estimates for 1995 (see Annex I below). The Advisory Committee considers the total of $11,214,377 spent in 1994 and estimated for 1995 for the move to be high. The Committee is also of the view that total estimated costs should have been provided in the context of a comprehensive plan for the move to enable scrutiny by the Advisory Committee and the Executive Committee. The Committee notes that consultants and contractual services account for $1,491,635, furniture and equipment $6,703,911 and the medical service $150,146. (For consultants, please see para. 42 below.) The Committee was informed that a full medical service will be established at the new premises. The Advisory Committee requests that effective close cooperation and coordination particularly in areas of procurement of equipment, supplies and furniture be established with the UNOG medical service.

13. The representatives of the High Commissioner informed the Advisory Committee that no lease had been signed for the rent of the new (MBT) building, and no rent would be payable in 1995, as the Swiss authorities were still considering what if any, rent would be appropriate. In this regard, the Advisory Committee expressed the strong hope that the Swiss authorities will generously extend to UNHCR the most favourable financial conditions possible for both occupancy and maintenance of the building, in recognition of the nature of UNHCR's activities and their dependance on voluntary funding.

14. The Advisory Committee believes that an issue closely related to the question of accommodation at UNHCR Headquarters is the rapid growth in the number of staff at Headquarters. The Advisory Committee notes that this has had serious implications for UNHCR accommodation at Headquarters. The proliferation of staff at

Headquarters would not only rapidly deplete office space to the extent that both the new MBT and the VNG buildings would be filled to capacity in the very near future, but would also impact on resources for programme delivery. The Advisory Committee believes that the present situation and rate of growth of staff at Headquarters (see para. 16 below) cannot be sustained and requests that it be addressed by the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee as a matter of urgency; the possibility of operations through regional service centres should be explored in an effort to alleviate the burden at Headquarters both in terms of space and operating costs.

15. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed that UNHCR, as part of the preparations for the yearly Regional Operations Review to be held in November 1995 (see paragraph 190 of Part II of the overview document), is conducting an in-depth review of all Headquarters functions. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee was informed that UNHCR's initiatives to decentralize and delegate additional authority from Headquarters to Field Offices include the following, a number of which would be further developed in 1996:

1. A pilot project, through training, to pass any personnel administration functions to Representatives in the Field;

2. The establishment of local Appointments Committees for recruitment of local staff;

3. Decentralization of training programmes for implementing partners to Field Offices;

4. Delegation of the management of non-staff administrative budgets to Field Offices, including the ability to revise amounts between objects of expenditure;

5. The establishment of local property survey boards to manage, redeploy and dispose of many UNHCR assets. This effort is linked to the new asset management system whereby data on all purchases is maintained and updated electronically.

6. Delegation of greater authority to Offices to make alterations to operational projects without reference to Headquarters. This includes the introduction of new activities, revisions of amounts budgeted at the sectoral level and the selecting of implementing partners;

7. The establishment of more local contracts committees to allow for local and regional purchases to a value of US $200,000.

16. As can be seen from paragraph 189 of document A/AC.96/845/Part II, the number of staff at Headquarters was 593 as of 1 January 1992, 685 as at 1 January 1993 and 749 as at 1 January 1994. For 1995, at 1 January 1995, a total of 841 posts at Headquarters has been shown representing an increase of almost 42 per cent

compared with the 1992 totals. The Committee points out that these totals do not include consultants, personnel performing contractual services, and staff in transit awaiting assignment, who may also require office space.

17. The Advisory Committee notes that Table VIII of Part I of the overview document shows a total of 843 Headquarters posts as at 1 July 1995 although as indicated in paragraph 8 above, the revised estimates included provision for a net increase of 61 posts. On enquiry the Advisory Committee was informed that this was due to the fact that initial 1995 levels reflect the results of a review by the High Commissioner and her senior staff in April 1994. Revised 1995 levels reflect the results of a similar review in November 1994. The Advisory Committee points out that reviews which take place after the ACABQ and Executive Committee have considered the budget estimates result in ex post facto actions which complicate the process of legislative oversight and approval. The Advisory Committee requests the High Commissioner to ensure to the extent possible that staffing and management reviews take place prior to legislative review of the proposed budget, and whenever possible, prior to the publication of the budget document. After approval of the budget by the Executive Committee additional staff resources including the establishment of posts as a result of additional special or emergency situation should be clearly identified in the document with justification.

18. With regard to the question of whether increases in staffing at Headquarters were due to emergency situations or to new initiatives, from the information requested and provided to the Advisory Committee, the Committee was not able to ascertain whether some 30 per cent of the increases in staff cited was directly related to emergency situations and to what extent the requirements could have been met through redeployment. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recommends that before posts are created, a detailed analysis be undertaken to establish whether the requirements could be met from within existing staff resources or whether the activity could be postponed. Additional resources in the revised estimates relating to both staff and non-staff requirements should clearly indicate a rationale for their inclusion during a current budget year. The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that revised estimates should not be used as a mechanism to introduce new administrative/support activities which have not been previously mandated.

IMIS

19. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 65 (iii) (A/AC.96/845/Part I) that the $1.5 million reduction in the IMIS budget was "due to delays incurred in the implementation of various modules of the system in New York and a review of requirements". On enquiry, the representatives of the High Commissioner informed the Advisory Committee that the significant savings against the budget for IMIS reflected the fact that the appropriateness of IMIS for UNHCR's needs was under review. The IMIS financial modules in the present form did not meet UNHCR's all-important field needs, while the human resources module was not yet significantly more functional than UNHCR's existing system. UNHCR was currently revising its long-term information systems plan, with integration capacity across all systems a prerequisite. Once requirements were specified, a decision would be made on how these would best be met, including whether this should be done through adaptation of

commercial packages now available or through the significant adaptation of IMIS, which it is already clear, would be required.

Initial 1996 estimates

20. As indicated in paragraph 66 of the overview document (A/AC.96/845/Part I) the initial 1996 estimates for Headquarters of $105.1 million have been calculated with the same budget parameters used for the 1995 revised estimates; no inflation factor has been built into these estimates and the decrease in total estimates can be mainly attributable to projected decreases in staff and non-staff requirements.

21. With regard to decreases relating to staff costs, ($11.3 million) the Advisory Committee notes that these are mainly due to the fact that staffing for activities such as those relating to the operations in Rwanda and Burundi and former Yugoslavia have been budgeted only up to 31 December 1995, while activities related to the Commonwealth of Independent States had been budgeted up to March 1996. Decreases in non-staff costs in the amount of $2.0 million are attributable mainly due to the fact the move to the new MBT building will have been completed.

22. Provision in the 1996 estimates has been made for the creation of the post of an Assistant High Commissioner (Policy, Planning and Operations) at the Assistant-Secretary-General level effective 1 January 1996. As indicated in paragraph 2 above, detailed information relating to this matter has been submitted in document A/AC.96/846/Part VII/Add.1) together with additional information provided to the Advisory Committee by representatives of the High Commissioner.

23. The Advisory Committee requested and was provided with a description of duties for both, the existing Deputy High Commissioner post which is at the Assistant Secretary-General level, as well as for the proposed Assistant High Commissioner post at the same level. The Committee was also provided with an organigramme showing the line responsibilities of both the posts. While it is envisaged that both incumbents would, inter alia, assist the High Commissioner in the formulation of UNHCR's policies, initiate and develop strategies to facilitate the discharge of her mandate, and exercise oversight in the implementation of such strategies by the relevant organizational units in UNHCR, the Assistant High Commissioner would specifically exercise supervision over the five regional bureaux and ensure effective coordination between the bureaux and the other organizational units within UNHCR. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes the information in paragraphs 3 and 4 of document A/AC.96/846/Part VII/Add.1 outlining the need for further strengthening UNHCR's executive direction and management capacity at the higher levels. Given the complexity, scope, and magnitude of UNHCR operations, the Advisory Committee agrees with the High Commissioner's proposal for the creation of a Assistant High Commissioner post at the Assistant-Secretary-General level.

24. Projects and initiatives with an impact on changes in estimates relating to programme delivery and administrative support costs both in the field and at Headquarters are as follows: (i) Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS), (ii) the Asset Management System (iii) Career Management System (CMS) Project, (iv) Training (v) Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) telecommunications project.

25. With regard to EPRS, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 69 of the Overview document (Part I) that expenditure in 1994 (under both Programme Delivery and Administrative Support) amounted to $2.1 million, while the revised 1995 estimates amount to $4.4 million, representing an increase of $2.3 million over the 1995 initial estimates. The Committee was informed that $2.2 million of the 1995 estimate is for the one time purchase of emergency stock stored in Canada. As indicated in the document, this was for stock-piling of emergency office and staff accommodation material for use in areas where infrastructure is lacking. The 1996 initial estimates stand at $2.4 million. The Advisory Committee was informed that currently there are four stock pile locations. The choice of location was determined on the basis of easy access to the required material. In view of the administrative and other overhead costs involved, the Advisory Committee cautions against having stock piles in too many locations.

26. The Advisory Committee understands that in addition to its central warehousing facilities in Amsterdam, Iskenderun (Turkey), in Dubai, and Canada as a cost saving measure, UNHCR has negotiated approximately 15 framework agreements with commercial suppliers for storage of non-emergency and stock replenishment materials until required. The Advisory Committee welcomes such initiatives.

27. The Asset Management System (para. 71 of A/AC.96/845/Part I) is aimed at increasing the capability of each UNHCR field office to improve the control of UNHCR assets as well as those of its implementing partners. In 1994 expenditure for this project amounted to $564,700 ($87,300 below revised estimate); the 1995 revised estimate is $338,400 or $113,400 higher than the initial estimate. The system is expected to be fully implemented in 1995 although the Advisory Committee was informed that there are likely to be some budgetary implications for 1996 for extending the system to cover UNHCR's implementing partners.

28. As indicated in paragraph 70 of the overview document (A/AC.96/845/Part I) the Career Management System (CMS) project was launched in 1994 and was designed, inter alia, to enhance human resources competencies within UNHCR and match them to the needs of the organization; the project would also contribute towards an improved system of performance evaluation, identify training needs and compile relevant data to produce competency frameworks for a core list of UNHCR jobs. All the various components of the project are expected to be completed over an estimated period of two years. Expenditure for the project in 1994 amounted to $515,800 and related mainly to consultancy fees. The revised 1995 estimates are $1.9 million, against initial, but not comprehensive estimates of $0.6 million, since implementation requirements for the project could only be defined after the initial phase of the project has been completed in late 1994 and early 1995. The Advisory Committee was informed that the increase was due mainly to the consultancy fees required to continue the project and that the system would be tested in a six selected Asian countries pilot project beginning in the last quarter of 1995 and expected to be completed in the first quarter of 1996. Initial 1996 estimates are $0.8 million as consultants are expected to be required only until August 1996.

29. With regard to the training component of the budget, the Advisory Committee notes that (para.73 A/AC.96/845/Part I) "in 1995, as part of a move to improve the formulation and delivery of training, the responsibility for budget

administration and management of training activities has now been transferred to the relevant units at Headquarters". The Advisory Committee is concerned that decentralization of the training component and the priorities set by each individual unit might result in differences in the overall training priorities of the organization. However, the Advisory Committee was informed that since results of the exercise have been somewhat mixed, a Training Advisory Board has been set up to monitor and assess UNHCR's training activities. The Advisory Committee requests the High Commissioner to ensure that training programmes are cost effective, and that they are designed to address specific problems, the solution to which would enhance UNHCR's capacity to deliver its mandated activities. Although as indicated in para. 73 of the overview document, the revised 1995 estimates for training are shown at $2.9 million and initial estimates for 1996 at $3.4 million, on enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the overall estimated cost of training in 1996 included in the budget amounted to $6.3 million. The Advisory Committee also believes that the budget for the CMS project should have been combined with the overall training budget.

30. The Advisory Committee recalls its comments on the subject of VSATS in its report A/AC.96/834 which, inter alia, had recommended that UNHCR continue its efforts to develop telecommunications capability in cooperation with the United Nations and its programmes and operations but not invest in further purchase of VSATs or undertake related expenditure until approval of a comprehensive proposal. The Advisory Committee welcomes progress in this connection as indicated in paragraphs 194 to 197 of document A/AC.96/845/Part II, and will consider the matter in further detail in the context of its examination of the Secretary-General's report on telecommunications. The Advisory Committee notes that for 1995, UNHCR's initial budget for VSATs and related requirements was $2.2 million, the revised 1995 estimates have been reduced to $545,400 and the 1996 initial estimates stand at $1.8 million.

31. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 76 of document A/AC.96/845/Part I, that the High Commissioner is proposing to extend the provisions of the Fund for International Staff Housing and Basic Amenities to improve the conditions of service in the most difficult duty stations, including some capital cities. The cost of this extension would amount in 1966 to some $1.0 million and rather than use the Programme Reserve to completely finance the operation of this Fund, it is proposed that the Fund in future draw on Special Programme resources as well. In other words it is proposed that Special Programme resources be used to replenish the Fund for International Staff Housing and Basic Amenities to the extent that international staff benefitting from the provisions of the Fund are a charge to a particular Special Programme; thus for 1996, it is also proposed that an additional amount of up to $500,000 be transferred from the Programme Reserve to cover the extension of the provisions of the Fund, to those staff who are a charge to General Programmes. The Advisory Committee does not object to these proposals.

32. On enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that as at 14 July 1995 the Housing Fund was applicable in 70 duty stations, where a total of 164 staff were assigned. For budgetary purposes it was believed that an additional 60 staff would be added to that number. By using the existing formula, which takes into consideration such factors as post adjustment and rental subsidy threshold, the costs for 60 additional staff amount to $1,080,000.

Funds and Reserves

33. Paragraph 27 of document A/AC.96/845/Part I sets out the approved purposes for the Programme Reserve as follows:

(a) to cover unexpected increases in the costs of projects financed from the current or previous years' programmes, or from an Emergency Fund allocation made in a previous year;

(b) to meet the cost of modifications to current year projects that may be necessary to achieve the approved project objectives;

(c) to increase allocation to meet needs resulting from a new influx or refugees belonging to a group already receiving assistance under the current year programme; and

(d) to increase, as required, with the Executive Committee's approval, the Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities Fund.

34. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 28 of the same document that for 1995 the Programme Reserve was established at a level of 10 per cent of programmed activities; for 1996 it is proposed that the Programme Reserve be set at 12 per cent. The Advisory Committee also notes from paragraph 37 of the same document that the increase is to cover any exchange rate losses at Headquarters not exceeding 2 per cent of programmed activities that may result from increased Headquarters costs directly due to exchange rate fluctuations. The proposed increase in the Programme Reserve to 12 per cent for this purpose is specific to 1996; as from 1997, the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund will be used to meet increases due to currency fluctuations.

35. On enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that calculations had been done at the rate of SwF 1.32 to US $1 and that if a rate of SwF 1.18 had been used an additional $6.0 million would be used from the Programme Reserve. The Advisory Committee points out that this use of the Programme Reserve and its increase by 2 per cent as a cushion against exchange rate fluctuations is not within the approved purposes listed above.

36. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 31 of document A/AC.96/845 part I that the level of the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation (GAVR) is currently set at $20.0 million. The Committee notes from paragraph 32 of the same document that it is proposed that the use of the GAVR should be enhanced by its extension to voluntary repatriation operations for refugees included under Special Programmes; in a given year, an allocation of up to $10.0 million may be made for

any such voluntary repatriation operation; as from 1997 the level of the GAVR for a given year would be set between $20 million and 10 per cent of the budgetary estimates for voluntary repatriation for the previous year. The GAVR would be known as the Voluntary Repatriation Fund.

Governance and Oversight

37. The Advisory Committee recalls the following comment it had made in its report A/AC.96/834:

> "The Advisory Committee notes that the largest part of UNHCR's operations falls within the category of Special Programmes (Table VII). The Advisory Committee believes that the Executive Committee should consider appropriate ways to ensure greater oversight and monitoring of these resources since in many cases only ex post facto reporting on these programmes is made available."

38. In this connection the Advisory Committee notes that informal consultations on UNHCR's budget structure, including the question of "governance", have been held as indicated in paragraphs 34 to 38 and paragraph 67 of document A/AC.96/845/Part III.

39. The Advisory Committee was also informed that in the context of the review of the Executive Committee's working methods and cycle of meetings, consensus was reached on a proposal to be submitted to the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee that the Executive Committee reconstitute its annual cycle of meetings to comprise one annual plenary session and a number of inter-sessional meetings of a Standing Committee of the Whole. The Standing Committee would replace the current Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection (SCIP), the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (SCAF) and the Informal Meetings of the Executive Committee.

40. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the Standing Committee would be able to accommodate on its agenda, items relating to international protection and/or programme, administrative and financial matters and would be well situated to consider policy issues that cut across the mandates of the existing sub-committees.

41. The Advisory Committee welcomes these developments and trusts that the Executive Committee will have greater opportunity to exercise additional oversight and governance over the resources for the General Programme, for the Special and Repatriation Programmes and over the general question of the efficiency and productivity of all UNHCR operations.

42. In this connection the Advisory Committee wishes to bring to the attention of the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee some of the findings and related recommendations of the Board of Auditors particularly in its recent report for the period ended 31 December 1994. The Board has identified significant deficiencies in the maintenance of accounting records, preparation of accounts and

maintenance of cash and bank accounts by implementing partners. Secondly, the Board recommends that effective action be taken to regulate the overhead costs of implementing partners. Furthermore with regard to another subject, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the anomalies revealed in the audit of consultancy hiring practices are striking and need urgent attention.

43. The Committee points out that the Board has made similar comments in previous reports and the Advisory Committee is submitting its comments on the full report of the Board to the General Assembly. In the meantime the Committee requests the High Commissioner to include in her next budget submission for 1996 information on the action the Office has taken to address the weaknesses identified in the Board's report and the related recommendations on programme and human resource management. The Committee points out that in view of the financial situation of the Office, one way of delivering more programmes at a time of financial constraint is to ensure that recommendations such as those of the Board are implemented expeditiously. Furthermore the Advisory Committee believes that since implementing partners play such a critical role in UNHCR operations, it is absolutely essential for the agreements reached with them to specify clearly what their role is and what the obligation of the UNHCR is in terms of funding, especially with regard to staff costs, salaries and allowances and termination indemnities.

44. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its report A/AC.96/834, it had commented extensively on the High Commissioner's proposal on the establishment of an Inspection and Evaluation Service. The Advisory Committee had also requested that a progress report on the functioning of the Service be provided in the context of UNHCR's next budget report.Document A/AC.96/852 is in response to that request. While the Advisory Committee appreciates the information provided in the progress report, the Committee recommends that in future such information be incorporated into the main budget documentation; the information should include details on specific problems addressed and the mechanisms used for follow-up used to ascertain whether recommendations of the Service have been implemented. Changes and improvements as a result of the Service's recommendations should also be reported.

45. The Advisory Committee exchanged views on the subject with the representatives of the High Commissioner and was informed that the Service became operational on 1 January 1995 but that the full complement of personnel was not on board until some time later since the Director of the Service was required to fulfill other responsibilities before taking up office with the Service. The numbers and levels of staff in the Inspection and Evaluation Service, as indicated in paragraph 68 of document (A/AC.96/845/Part III), show a complement of five professional (one D-2, one P-5, three P-4) and three General Service staff.

46. The Advisory Committee was informed that the inspection and evaluation function in UNHCR is supplemented by internal audits being carried out by the Audit and Management Consulting Division (AMCD) of the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). UNHCR bears the costs of this audit coverage for which expenditure in 1994 amounted to $ 1,045,017 and is estimated at $1,397,000 for 1995. The costs cover salary and common staff costs relating to eight Professional and three General Service posts in AMCD.

47. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 135 of document A/AC.96/845/Part II that "in 1994, a series of evaluation studies were undertaken jointly with external consultants, whenever a particular technical expertise was not available within UNHCR, or when the Inspection and Evaluation Service staff could not carry out the evaluation due to other missions and commitments. In 1995 and 1996, six evaluations are planned to be undertaken by consultants." As indicated in the document, while expenditure for this purpose amounted to $0.1 million in 1994, it is estimated at $0.2 million for 1995 and a similar amount for 1996. The Advisory Committee enquired and received additional information with regard to the 1995 and 1996 programme of work of the Inspection and Evaluation Service of UNHCR. The Advisory Committee recommends that the plans should be carefully designed to address specific problems which may have been identified as well and priorities set by UNHCR in its areas of high-risk operations.

48. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, given the increasing size and complexity of UNHCR operations, both staff and non-staff resources allocated for the Inspection and Evaluation Service should be kept under review by the High Commissioner with a view to strengthening its effectiveness as a management tool. The Advisory Committee also recommends continued close cooperation between UNHCR's Inspection and Evaluation Service and OIOS.

Education Account

49. As indicated in paragraph 46 of document A/AC.96/845/Part I, the Education Account was formally established by the Executive Committee in 1966. Since 1990, the Education Account has been used primarily to enable refugee students in developing countries to obtain university/tertiary education. Since late 1993, as contributions for this purpose began declining, UNHCR did not accept new students to be funded from the Education Account; in January 1994 it launched an appeal to replenish the Education Account so as to cover the needs of some 1,200 ongoing students. In an effort to attract funding for the Account, the High Commissioner, with the approval of the Executive Committee, sought to broaden the use of the account; a further appeal was launched in June 1994.

50. As indicated in paragraph 2 of document EC/SC.2/81, the response to date to the appeal issued in June 1994 and all subsequent efforts to replenish the Education Account has not only precluded its broader use, but is insufficient to fund the completion of education of some 800 students. The resource requirements as reflected in the document envisage an amount of $0.8 million outstanding for 1995, requirements of $1.0 million for 1996 and approximately $0.5 million for 1997. The document also outlines three options and their implications, ranging from (i) discontinuance of assistance to the refugee students, (ii) seeking further trust funds to replenish the Education Account, and (iii) approval, on an exceptional basis, to charge expenditure in this regard which cannot be met through the Education Account to General Programmes. UNHCR supports this third option. The Executive Committee is being asked to take a policy decision on this issue.

New Building - Location 236

Chapter of Expenditure	*1994 expenditure $*	*1995 revised $*
Temporary Assistance	**104,946**	**133,600**
Driver additional shuttle		
Labelling of furniture and equipment		
Editorial/secretary		
Help with move of computers		
Consultants	**168,898**	
Project Manager	168,898	
Consultant for move of computers		
Overtime	**189**	**1,500**
Travel	**1,429**	**3,800**
Contractual Services	**875,937**	**446,800**
Architects	577,536	75,800
Move consultant		47,000
LAN/PABX-design VNG	100,455	198,000
LAN/PABX-design MBT	162,183	
PABX software		30,500
Network move	31,579	
Other	4,183	95,500
General Operating Expenses	**73,761**	**530,400**
Move		530,400
Natels used during planning and move to building	2,526	
Telephone installation	52,679	
Modifications MBT		
Modifications VNG		
Other	18,556	
Supplies and Materials	**60,301**	
Medical service	55,358	
Other	4,943	

New Building - Location 236

Chapter of Expenditure	*1994 expenditure $*	*1995 revised $*
Furniture and Equipment	**5,427,711**	**1,276,200**
SENAB-furniture	4,347,758	772,250
Furniture - other		133,950
Sign-system	182,398	
Medical service	150,146	
Various computer equipment	230,470	
PABX (VNG)	429,546	370,000
Security system/equipment	42,160	
Other	45,234	
Other	**896,505**	**1,212,400**
Fixed LAN hubs (MBT)	747,505	487,300
PTT-fibre optics (MBT/VNG/Vermont/AP)	149,000	
Fixed LAN hubs (VNG)		725,100
Various alternations to premises		
TOTAL	**7,609,677**	**3,604,700**

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A

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
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Forty-sixth session

INFORMATION NOTE ON THE CIS CONFERENCE PROCESS

1. At its forty-ninth session on 23 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted resolution 49/173, Comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and related migratory movements.

2. In it, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need for the international community to consider comprehensive regional approaches to the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and related migratory movements, and:

> (a) call[ed] upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in consultation with concerned States and in coordination with relevant intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations, to continue to consider comprehensive regional approaches to the problems of refugees and displaced persons;
>
> (b) also call[ed] upon the High Commissioner to continue her efforts to promote and develop a preparatory process, leading to the convening, not later than 1996, of a regional conference to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant neighbouring States, and urge[d] States and the intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations concerned to support that process, including follow-up measures.

GE.95-02578

3. General Assembly resolution 49/173 mandated UNHCR to initiate a process which would involve a great number of actors in the international community, in particular Governments, international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as development agencies and financial institutions. UNHCR is currently acting in close partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). The three organizations share the same concern over the magnitude and complexity of actual and potential migration and refugee issues in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and neighbouring countries. They also recognize the complementary of mandates, approaches and procedures.

4. A UNHCR/IOM/OSCE ad hoc Secretariat for the preparation of the preliminary meetings and of the Conference was established within UNHCR in January 1995 for a 15-month period. The Secretariat focuses on achieving the following objectives: to steer the preparatory process for the CIS Conference through consultations and negotiations with the parties concerned in close cooperation with interested Governments and international organizations; to support the process in terms of logistics, secretarial support, translation, interpretation, supplies and documentation, as well as participation in the conference and meetings; to coordinate the provision of expert inputs and studies on relevant subjects; and to provide all related public information functions.

5. A joint UNHCR/IOM appeal for the Conference Secretariat was launched on 20 January 1995. The overall meeting and conference costs for UNHCR are budgeted at a total of $ 748,000 for the period 1 January 1995 to 31 March 1996. A contribution of $ 384,476 is required to cover IOM's costs.

6. Between December 1994 and August 1995, six informal meetings with representatives of concerned and interested Governments and international organizations were held in Geneva to give direction to the preparatory process. Among the first tasks of the Steering Group were, to clarify the objectives of the process and prepare for the first Meeting of Experts.

7. A series of national consultations took place during February, March and April 1995 in Ukraine, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova, with the first regional consultation taking place in March in the Kyrgyzstan for the five Central Asian Republics. Consultations have also taken place in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Baltic States.

8. A first Meeting of Experts was held on 18 and 19 May 1995 in Geneva. It was attended by the following countries and international organizations:

> The CIS: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine;

Other interested States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States of America;

International organizations: Centre for Human Rights, Council of Europe, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Labour Organization, OSCE/ODIHR, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the United Nations Office at Geneva;

Other institutions: European Commission.

9. The main tasks of the first Meeting of Experts were to identify the issues of concern and to prepare the workplan for the Conference.

10. The types of movements to be addressed in the process were identified as follows: refugees, displaced persons, resettlers, formerly deported peoples, irregular migration, trafficking in migrants, stranded migrants and ecological migration. In addition, the following general issues were raised.

(a) Inadequacies of current terminology related to refugees and displaced persons. Agreement was reached on the need for a more uniform and harmonized use of terminology in national legislation and regional agreements. It was recognized that the refugee definition contained in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees might not fully cover current regional needs. It was also felt that various involuntary movements taking place in the region would not fall within existing norms and standards.

(b) National implementation of international instruments. It was recognized that there is a gap between international instruments and implementation at the national level; the lack of effective implementation of international obligations is due to economic, social, and political difficulties inherent in the transition process. Proper guidance and technical advisory services should be provided, in particular to assist in the establishment of appropriate administrative structures.

(c) Emergency preparedness. A need was perceived for contingency plans and the establishment of a structure conducive to the reception and provision of relief to refugees and displaced persons.

(d) There was recognition of the need for a harmonized regional approach to be adopted and subsequently implemented in the areas of preventive action, management of displacement crises and burden sharing mechanisms. It was also felt that a unified approach should be used for promotion and training activities, including the organization of conferences and seminars at the regional and sub-regional level.

(e) It was proposed that an in-depth study of the root causes underlying displacement in the region as well an assessment of the psychological impact of population displacement be undertaken.

(f) It was recognized that many countries in the region require assistance in the strengthening of their administrative systems in order to be able to deal with migration challenges.

(g) There was recognition of the need for cooperation amongst the countries themselves, amongst international organizations, and within the broader international community.

11. A draft work plan was submitted to the Meeting of Experts and later refined in light of comments received by the Secretariat. The plan is at present structured as follows: a series of sub-regional meetings to be held between July and September 1995, where country representatives will analyse the issues of concern identified in the first Meeting of Experts; a second Meeting of Experts envisaged for November 1995, when possible solutions will be discussed on the basis of the conclusions of the sub-regional meetings and of the input provided by the non-governmental sector; a drafting committee to be convened simultaneously to start drafting a Declaration of Principles and a Programme of Action; a third Meeting of Experts tentatively scheduled for December 1995; and a preparatory conference and the conference itself, planned for the first quarter of 1996. The Steering Group will continue to meet at regular intervals, in Geneva, throughout the process.

12. The first two sub-regional meetings were held in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 10 and 11 July, for the Transcaucasus region, and in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, on 27 July, for the Central Asian Republics. In both meetings, participants reviewed and discussed existing terminology, and agreed on a common set of terms to be used to define the various categories of persons moving within the region. Effects of population displacement were analysed thoroughly and governmental responses assessed. Finally, the issues of emergency preparedness, early warning, migration management, return and reintegration were tackled.

13. The overall objective of the process initiated in 1994 is to provide a wide and open forum for the international community, and particularly the concerned countries, to acknowledge, review and discuss all population movements taking place in the CIS and neighbouring region in a humanitarian and non-political framework. In addition, the main objective of the process would be to devise an integrated strategy for the region through the drafting of a Declaration of Principles and a Programme of Action. In the long run, a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the concerned parties should be reached. This would be reflected in an accountability framework, which would pave the way for achieving durable solutions to existing problems and for preventing potential ones. The plan, endorsed and supported by the international community, would enable countries to cope with the migration challenges faced by the CIS region.

14. The primary and ultimate beneficiaries of this endeavour are persons in need of UNHCR protection and assistance in the region, as well as those of concern to IOM.

15. The CIS Conference process would contribute to strengthening institutional cooperation not only among international and regional governmental organizations, but also with NGOs concerned with population displacements in the CIS and neighbouring countries. Therefore, the CIS Conference Secretariat welcomes the collaborative effort between the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), the Open Society Institute and other NGOs active in the region. In this regard, the Secretariat has been requested to ensure the linkage between the intergovernmental and the non-governmental processes.

16. The CIS Conference Secretariat has kept the NGO community fully informed by organizing briefing sessions at each stage of the process. In addition, a meeting will be organized in October 1995 to discuss possible solutions with NGOs, academics and other independent actors. The conclusions of the meeting will be submitted to the second Meeting of Experts. In addition, following a suggestion from the Open Society Institute to organize consultations at the field level with local and international NGOs active in the region, meetings with local NGOs have taken place in Tbilisi and Moscow in July 1995. Similar meetings are planned for autumn 1995 in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, Kiev, Ukraine, and Novosibirsk, Russian Federation.

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INFORMATION NOTE ON THE CIS CONFERENCE PROCESS

Corrigendum

Page 3, second paragraph, fifth line

After International Labour Organization, insert International Organization for Migration.

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Forty-sixth session

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